Remarks by the Honorable Frederick Gregory
NASA Deputy Administrator
Aerospace Industries Association
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.
September 28, 2005

Thank you Congressman Weldon (Dave Weldon R-FL) for that very generous introduction and good afternoon everyone.

It is an honor to be introduced by you and I certainly wish to express NASA's appreciation for your and Representative Norm Dicks' leadership of the House Aerospace Caucus. Also, it was great to see you at the launch of Discovery this summer.

Today, I wish to give you an update on the Vision for Space Exploration, and emphasize why it will be so important in the coming days and weeks for members of AIA to keep our members of Congress informed as to what we do and why it's so important to our nation's long-term future.

But first, I'd like to give you an update on the post-hurricane status of NASA's facilities in the Gulf Coast. After taking minimal damage, The Johnson Space Center is open and has officially taken back control of the International Space Station.

The Stennis Space Center in Mississippi and Michoud External Tank Assembly Facility in New Orleans are also now operating, although it appears Katrina is making our March launch window unlikely with May appearing feasible.

In the immediate aftermath of these storms, which NASA earth observation technology played a large role in helping to accurately predict and monitor in cooperation with our colleagues at NOAA, we've been working hard to take care of the needs of our dedicated employees, as about 20 percent of Stennis employees and 40 percent of Michoud employees are homeless.

The Administrator has stated we will do everything we can to help our employees get their lives back on track and that we will continue NASA's proud tradition of utilizing Stennis and Michoud to produce the space hardware and research application products that contribute so greatly to our mission objectives.

These are the objectives that President Bush has said "Will enhance America's long-term economic, scientific and security interests."

Our new mission, under the Vision for Space Exploration requires us to focus our efforts on an achievable, practical plan to move beyond the space shuttle, with new launch and cargo carrying vehicles, into a new era of exploration activities beyond low Earth orbit, something I'd always hoped we'd be doing.

We believe our new exploration systems architecture will help us achieve our nation's space exploration goals in a manner that is both cost-effective and efficient, and which complements other national space launch requirements.

This architecture fits within NASA's available budget of just seven tenths of one percent of the federal budget, and envisions timely progress in reaching our space exploration goals.

Since we are here in a place where the people's representatives consider funding for federal government programs, I'd like to put the hard work of space exploration in a broader focus.

The American people have always had the ability to look beyond the challenges of the present day with optimism and hope, and make long-term investments in the future well being of our society.

The space program is such an investment. It is our seed corn for a future that will realize amazing technological developments and an expansion of our civilization and culture throughout the solar system.

Today, some critics suggest that we deal with our national responsibilities by cutting back on the space program.

I frankly do not believe America needs to consider ceding our leadership in space, any more that our country had to consider giving up on the promise of aviation 99 years ago following the San Francisco earthquake, or abandon the moon landing program in 1969, following Hurricane Camille.

When this nation makes a steady investment in the space program—the equivalent of allocating a small portion of one's individual IRA account in a promising high technology mutual fund—we support pioneering exploration activities that will fuel American creativity, innovation and technology development.

Indeed, we're confident the technology development necessary to execute and implement our long-range exploration program will accelerate advances in robotics, autonomous and fault tolerant systems, human-machine interfaces, materials, life support systems and novel applications of microdevices, to name a few.

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In this regard, I'd like to comment briefly on the article in USA Today this morning about the Shuttle program. What the Administrator said, really a restatement of words he has previously used, is that due to circumstances of policy-making that took place over 30 years

ago, this nation committed to a shuttle system that for all its strengths is still is pushing the envelope of technology.

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There is another specific issue related to NASA's funding that deserves mentioning. You may have heard some people suggest ending the shuttle program right away, instead of waiting through 2010 for its orderly retirement.

Such a move would break our commitments to our International partners and strain relationships that I have worked very hard to cultivate through my chairmanship of the International Space Station Multilateral Coordination Board.

Second, if we retired the shuttle with undue haste, we would risk losing the very talented engineers we are counting on to develop our next generation spacecraft.

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In this regard, last month Administrator Griffin and the Department of Defense Executive Agent for Space, Dr. Ron Sega, signed a letter which outlined

our agreement on our respective requirements for future launch systems.

Responding to the President's National Security Policy Directive 40, the agreement stipulates that separating human-rated space exploration from unmanned payload launch will best achieve reliable and affordable assured access to space while maintaining our industrial base in both liquid and solid propulsion launch systems.

The major elements of the agreed strategy for the use and development of national launch systems are as follows:

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We hope that the Congress will provide full funding of the President's Fiscal Year 2006 request. This includes funding that will ensure timely development of the proposed Crew Exploration and Crew Launch Vehicles, and redirection of Exploration Systems Research and Technology and Human Systems Research and Technology funding to Constellation Systems.

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